

Commission Conversation

April 2000

Volume 1, No. 2

Supervisor Training

Conservation District Supervisors are encouraged to register and attend the Washington Governmental Entity Pool training on April 19, 2001 in Bellevue.

The trainer, Jim Weber, Attorney of Littler, Mendelson, P.C. will cover Performance Evaluation Management and Lawful Termination.

The seminar runs from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the Meydenbauer Center, 11100 NE 6th Street in Bellevue.

There will not be a fee to attend the training and there will be reimbursement for mileage and meals. If you have any further questions regarding this training, please call John Konovsky at 509.933.7150.

MAY 15th!

The Commission met in regular session March 15, 2001 and moved to alert Districts that reporting and planning due dates will be strictly enforced.

What this means to your District and Basic Funding:

- If your district has not yet submitted its 2000 Annual Financial Report, you must do so before May 15, 2001 along with your Annual Plan of Work and report of Internal Audit.
- The FY 2002 Basic Funding Application is due June 1, 2001 along with your updated Money and Program Management Standards and Certification.
- Districts that meet this due date and the May 15th due date will receive their Basic Funding allotment July 1, 2001.
- Those Districts that do not meet the May 15th deadline will not receive Basic Funding for FY 2002.

Showcase Your Work

The Conservation Commission will be developing a fiscal year calendar for use by Supervisors and District Staff. The calendar will run from July 2001 through June 2002 and include all necessary dates and deadlines for Districts.

This is an opportunity to showcase the work of your District by submitting three calendar quality photos with descriptions by MAY 1st.

Email your photos in jpeg, tiff or bmp format to Debbie Becker at dbec461@ecy.wa.gov



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Check out the new CREP website!

Change Coming?

Will the Commission's Grant Programs Change for 2001-03 Biennium?

We have been asked many questions about possible changes in our grants programs for the 2001-03 Biennium. These questions were prompted mainly by the recent audit of three Commission grant programs by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC). See related article on page 3.

At their March 15, 2001 meeting, Commission members heard details of the audit from JLARC staff, as well as their recommendations. After discussing the audit and recommendations, Commission members agreed that certain changes in our grant programs could be made to increase their effectiveness and accountability. However, they weren't ready to adopt any broad changes right away. The Commission members did agree to carefully discern appropriate changes in grant programs over the course of the next six to nine months. This process will be carried out by grants staff interviewing individual Commission members, as well as WACD Officers and Directors. The interview material will be based on the JLARC investment practices model and how it applies to our grant programs.

Will there be any changes right away? No. For the first year of the new biennium (July 1, 2001 – June 30, 2002) there will be no JLARC-related changes in Commission grant programs.

However, because the Commission may make changes in grants policy and those changes would become effective in the second year of the biennium, your new Implementation Grants will be written only for the first year. These grants will be either amended or rewritten for the second year based on policy changes adopted by the Commission.

Also, we are not sending out applications for Competitive Grants at this time. Competitive applications will be sent to you after the Commission decides if this program will be changed.

Other Commission grant programs, including the Dairy Nutrient Management Grants; CREP Grants; Professional Engineering Grants; Puget Sound Grants; Limiting Factor Analysis Grants; and Basic Funding will all be continued as in the past, assuming the Commission receives appropriations for them.

If you have any questions, feel free to call Bob Bottman (360-407-6204) or Cheryl Witt (360-407-6205).

GIS UPDATE

Conservation Districts included in the USDA Information Technology Working Group

GIS Needs Being Examined

USDA has been working for the past few years at developing and implementing a modern technology initiative which includes Data Management, GIS Data Acquisition & Planning, Common Computing Environment (CCE), Electronic Access, Telecommunications, LAN/WAN and Security. Recently, USDA included representatives of NACD and NASCA on the planning teams for this initiative. Nicole McCoy from Washington State has been appointed by NACD and NCDEA to the Geographic Information System Information Technology Working Group (GIS ITWG). As a representative of the Conservation Districts, her task is to accurately represent District and State partners' GIS needs.

All District managers (and Conservation agency staff) should review **GIS in the USDA Service Center Agencies (SCA)** and complete the survey.

Unfortunately, time is not on our side on getting responses back. The responses are needed back from Districts and Conservation agencies **before April 10**. The GIS ITWG will be working on the rough draft of the GIS requirements in April so it is imperative to have responses from Districts as soon as possible. USDA wants everyone to have a voice and they want to be sure that they acquire the right GIS software.

*Story submitted by Nicole McCoy.
Contact her at:
nicole-mccoy@wa.nacdnet.org*

Investing in the Environment

A JLARC Audit

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) issued a report *on Investing in the Environment: Environmental Quality Grant and Loan Programs Performance Audit* on January 22, 2001. The Audit reviewed three Commission grant programs--CREP, Dairy and the Water Quality programs. All District Supervisors and Districts were mailed a copy of the report for review.

While the 100-page report covers the Findings in much greater detail, a review of *Chapter II, Distributing versus Investing* outlines the shift in focus that the Audit recommends.

The Audit provided six recommendations to achieve the identified need of shifting program focus from funding distribution towards a strategic benefit of investment. *The recommendations in brief:*

Reporting Meaningful Data

Recommendation 1: Each agency under this performance audit should continue to work to build internal capacity to report accurate and comprehensive project location and descriptive information to the Uniform Environmental Project Reporting System (UEPRS) for coordinating environmental projects.

Recommendation 2: Each agency under this performance audit should work collaboratively with their funding recipients to develop meaningful and comprehensive output and outcome measures that will be used to assess project and program investment performance and contribute to adaptive management.

Recommendation 3: All agencies under this performance audit should work collaboratively to prepare two separate but coordinated strategic plans for monitoring environmental conditions and investment performance in the areas of water quality and salmon recovery.

Investment Practices

Recommendation 4: Each agency under this performance audit should work to incorporate the key investment practices identified into their program structures and operations. (Found in Chapter 3)

Streamlining and Integrating Services

Recommendation 5: All agencies under this performance audit should work jointly and collaboratively with local governments and other funding recipients to streamline and better integrate the project application, selection, implementation, and monitoring process across programs.

Recommendation 6: The Office of Financial Management should coordinate a process for the six audited agencies to deliver annual progress reports to JLARC over the next five years on implementation of the report recommendations, beginning in September 2001.

Drought Update

The Conservation Commission has asked Conservation Districts to help respond to the drought. Districts may know better than any others who the individual water

users are and where the small, private irrigation districts are located. The Conservation Commission is encouraging Districts to make sure these individuals and groups know what options exist in leasing water to the State for 2001. Initial geographic priorities include the Methow, Wenatchee, Yakima, Walla Walla, Touchet, Middle Snake tributaries and the Dungeness River. Districts can get more information from John Konovsky at 509.933.7150.



Washington State CONSERVATION Commission

To protect, conserve and enhance the natural resources of the state.

The Washington State Conservation Commission is an equal opportunity employer.

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AFW Update

The informal public comment period for the draft document, "Guidelines for Preparation of Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plans," closed on March 13. The workgroup that put the draft document together is busy collating and answering comments that were submitted, as well as addressing the questions that came out of the public workshops. These answers will be formatted as a responsiveness document and will automatically be sent to everyone who submitted comments.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the responsiveness summary, contact Hibba Wahbeh, 360.407.7219, e-mail: hwah461@ecy.wa.gov

During the comment period, several irrigation districts stepped forward expressing interest in participating in a pilot project.

If you would like more information concerning the AFW process in general, or the irrigation district guidance document specifically, call Paula Smith, (360) 407-6209; e-mail: psmi461@ecy.wa.gov

Need Information?

Looking for grant sources? Voucher forms? Conservation pictures? Audit reports? Web pages for other conservation organizations? The most current e-mail address of a district employee? Contact information for a Commission member? Job descriptions?

We have what you are looking for at <http://www.conserver.org>.

Our online Library houses more than 700 documents and links to additional information, and our online Directory is continually updated with the latest, most accurate information.

We carry breaking news that could impact conservation districts, and maintain a calendar of upcoming events.

Don't miss out on important information! Make the Commission homepage a regular stop in your online travels.